



50
Years

INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

February 22 – March 18, 2023

on the OneAmerica Mainstage

Oedipus

by Sophocles

adapted by David Daniel

STUDY GUIDE

Indiana Repertory Theatre
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Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

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OEDIPUS BY SOPHOCLES • ADAPTED BY DAVID DANIEL

As a plague ravages Thebes, the citizens turn to their leadership. Oedipus is an extraordinary hero: courageous, flawed, determined to do what he must to protect his community—even if it means his own undoing. From the mists of Greece comes this compelling story of fate, human nature, and the devastating peril of secrets.

Recommended for students in grades 9-12

The performance will last about one hour and forty minutes, without intermission.

CONTENT ADVISORY

Oedipus is one of the oldest surviving plays in the world. Most actions occur off stage, but it contains descriptions of incest, murder, suicide, plague, and self-mutilation. Invocations to polytheistic deities and profanity occur.

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THE STORY OF THE PLAY

Oedipus Rex by Sophocles is thought to have been written and first performed around 429 BCE. It is widely considered the finest of all Greek tragedies. Like Shakespeare, however, Sophocles did not create his story. The myth of Oedipus originated in the Theban Cycle, a lost epic of Ancient Greek literature that pre-dated the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*. Just as these two sagas tell the story of Troy, the Theban cycle tells the story of the Greek city of Thebes.

The mythic Oedipus is raised in Corinth as the son of King Polybus and Queen Merope. When the Oracle at Delphi tells Oedipus that he is fated to kill his father and marry his mother, he leaves Corinth to escape such a terrible prophecy.

Arriving in Thebes, Oedipus discovers a city terrorized by the Sphynx. The Greek Sphynx has the head of a woman, the body of a lion, and the wings of a bird; it is a demon of destruction and bad luck. The Sphinx has commandeered the gate of Thebes, challenging anyone who tries to enter or leave the city to answer a riddle: "What walks on four feet in the morning, two feet at mid-day, and three feet at night?" Those who cannot answer the riddle—and not one person has yet answered it—are eaten by the Sphynx. Oedipus, however, figures out the answer: Man. As an infant, he crawls on all fours; as an adult, he walks upright on two feet; in old age, he walks with a cane. In some versions of the legend, Oedipus kills the Sphynx; in others, the Sphynx throws itself off a cliff or eats itself.

Oedipus is rewarded for rescuing Thebes by marrying Queen Jocasta, recent widow of King Laius. Together, Oedipus and Jocasta have two sons and two daughters. King Oedipus is much loved by the populace. But after several years, a plague strikes the city, bringing disease to people, livestock, and crops. Oedipus sends his wife Jocasta's brother Creon to Delphi to consult the Oracle for help. This is where the play *Oedipus Rex* begins.

Creon returns with the Oracle's pronouncement: the murderer of King Laius must be found and brought to justice. Oedipus curses the killer and vows to find him and exile him. Creon suggests consulting Tiresias, a highly respected seer, who warns Oedipus to stop the search. In a heated argument, Tiresias accuses Oedipus himself of the crime. Oedipus charges Creon and Tiresias with conspiring against him. Queen Jocasta tries to stop the fight between her brother and her husband. The circle of witnesses expands to include a man from Corinth, who arrives with fateful news about King Polybus, and a shepherd who hides a terrible secret. In the end, Oedipus's curse is fulfilled, to the horror of all who see.

*Costume rendering for the Chorus/Musician
by designer Sara Ryung Clement.*



SHREDS OF ANSWERS

BY JANET ALLEN, MARGOT LACY ECCLES ARTISTIC DIRECTOR

The place of Oedipus in literature is something like that of the Mona Lisa in art. Everyone knows the story, the first detective story of Western literature; everyone who has read or seen it is drawn into its enigmas and moral dilemmas. It presents a kind of nightmare vision of a world suddenly turned upside down.... It is a story that, as Aristotle says in the Poetics, makes one shudder with horror and feel pity just on hearing it. In Sophocles's hands, however, this ancient tale becomes a profound meditation on the questions of guilt and responsibility, the order (or disorder) of our world, and the nature of man. The play stands with the Book of Job, Hamlet, and King Lear as one of Western literature's most searching examinations of the problem of suffering.

—Charles Segal, *Oedipus Tyrannus: Tragic Heroism and the Limits of Knowledge*

“A nightmare vision of a world....” Aren’t we living that sufficiently in today’s “upside down” world? A fair question—but one that moves right into the heart of the belief we hold that art can lift and expand our daily lives through metaphor. While none of us aspires to live like Oedipus, his story gives us great insight into the breadth of human capacity for the unrelenting search for truth, and into the zealous desire of a good leader to protect their community from harm.



So why *Oedipus* now? A perfect storm of good reasons. First, I found a translation that opens the play to American audiences. For many years I have searched for a translation/adaptation that would meet us where we are (rather than hoping that we are all as encyclopedic about Greek divinity as the Ancient Greeks were). About a year ago I finally found David Daniel’s extremely sleek and actable version that makes the story spring to life in thrilling ways. Then we were able to secure David Alan Anderson to play the lead and James Still to direct, and to draw around them a remarkably accomplished group of actors and designers willing to walk undaunted in the labyrinth where this play lives in Western culture.

Even when one has great circumstances like these, the Greek plays require some crazy *carpe diem* to take them on. They are the Mount Everest of our Western theatrical literature, the most primal, the oldest, the most elemental, the greatest challenge—and therefore the most daunting to take on. I happen to have a large dose of that this year, in my last season before retirement, so *carpe diem* it is!

Costume rendering for the Shepherd by designer Sara Ryung Clement.

Oedipus has tremendous resonance to our troubled time: its inciting incident is a plague that has taken over the city. Oedipus, the King, vows to the populace to lift the plague by whatever means necessary—without knowing that this vow dooms him. The play is a study in leadership, and since we live in a country so riven by opposing views of what constitutes good leadership, this is a particularly timely debate. While Sophocles would have laughed to think that Oedipus would ever become a role model—characters, after all, are metaphors, not real people—Oedipus has become an endlessly exciting psyche to dissect. His motives both as a man and a leader have inspired constantly evolving definitions of humanity by philosophers, artists, and eventually, of course, psychoanalysts. (Freud and Nietzsche are the ones who really made Oedipus a household name). Plays call to us as artists at various moments in time, and *Oedipus* calls both artists and audiences to gain huge perspective about humanity’s soaring hopes and harrowing failings. The play shows us how humanity can strive for truth—and how it can fall when that truth is revealed.

Philosopher Joseph Campbell writes in his book *The Power of Myth* (based on the PBS series) something that rings hugely true about *Oedipus*:

Mythology is not a lie, mythology is poetry. It is metaphorical. It has been well said that mythology is the penultimate truth—penultimate because the ultimate cannot be put into words. It is beyond words. Beyond images, beyond the bounding rim of the Buddhist Wheel of Becoming. Mythology pitches the mind beyond that rim, to what can be known but not told.

Sophocles’s story was so familiar to its original audience that they knew its ending and its every twist and turn even before the play began. Yet they flocked to see this story staged over and over, in many plays by many different writers. What were they seeking? The same things we seek in our quest for art that resonates and expands our hearts and minds. We all want answers, or at least shreds of answers, to the ultimate question: What is it to be human? What can we glean from standing with Oedipus as he wrestles with his own humanity, with his own quest for truth? We at the IRT hope you find in this production some new shreds of answers as you consider your own humanity. How can we live through our own triumphs and tragedies, and emerge enlightened, and more at peace with our striving souls?

*David Little in
Oedipus at the Holy Place
by Robert Montgomery,
produced by the IRT in 1981.
The play is an adaptation of
Oedipus at Colonus by Sophocles,
a continuation of the Oedipus story.*



UBUNTU

BY DAVID DANIEL, ADAPTOR

South African social rights activist and Archbishop Desmond Tutu explained the philosophy of *ubuntu* as, “My humanity is bound up in yours, for we can only be human *together*.” It manifests the idea that humans cannot exist in isolation. We depend on connection, community, and caring. We add to and aid our communities. We march, we fill sand bags, we raise money, we help rebuild, we pitch in, we volunteer, we go to funeral services, we hug each other, we make casseroles.... In times of tragedy, we have a desperate need to *do* for each other. The poet, soldier, and clergyman John Donne wrote, “No man is an island entire of itself; every man is a piece of the continent, a part of the main.”

Some of you reading this have been coming to IRT for years. You’ve given your time, donated your money, dragged your friends.... IRT *is* because of who you are.

For many artists, IRT was their first job. It has been a part of divorce, marriage, birth, death, family, retirement ... and through it all, IRT has helped shape the lives of the people who are a part of it. They *are* because IRT is.

You and we are bound together by this place.

Oedipus and his Thebes are bound together. Their journey and suffering is shared. And like us all in times of need and pain, they, like us, will get through it *together*.

There is so much in this play. There is a murder mystery, a love story between a leader and his people, a treatise on hubris, a debate of divine morality, a tug of war between Fate and Free Will, an invitation to Sunday tea with Nihilism, and so much more. The production you are about to see is our contribution to that conversation.

I would like to add, as an adapter, that there were and are so many voices that have shaped my own. Langston Hughes, Christopher Logue, Maya Angelou, Anne Carson, Seamus Heaney, Ellen McLaughlin, Oscar Wilde, Madeline Miller, Stephen Vincent Benet, my mother, my father, fellow vets (all storytellers in their own wonderful ways), and thousands of writers and poets on line and in schools, churches, poetry cafes, and prisons whose written and spoken words have filled my ears and soul for decades.

I am because they were.



*Costume rendering
for the Priest by designer
Sara Ryung Clement.*

PLAYWRIGHT SOPHOCLES

Ancient Greek playwright Sophocles (c. 497-406 BCE) was born in Colonus, the son of a wealthy armor manufacturer. Highly educated, he was during his lifetime elected to several political offices in Athens, including treasurer, executive official, and commissioner. Several anecdotes from his contemporaries indicate that he was homosexual. Sophocles wrote more than 120 plays for the annual Athens dramatic festival. He competed in 30 festivals, winning 24, and placing second in the other six. Only seven of his plays have survived, of which the most famous are *Oedipus Rex*—often considered the greatest example of tragedy—and *Antigone*. Sophocles created characters of greater depth than previous playwrights. He increased the number of actors in a play from two to three—each playing multiple roles—thus reducing the importance of the chorus and increasing opportunities for conflict and plot development.



ADAPTOR DAVID DANIEL



David Daniel is a Core Company member and Education Director at American Players Theatre, where he has been bouncing on their boards (often literally) in plays for more than twenty years. He has had the honor of playing with audiences in wonderful theatre companies around the country. As a writer, he has written or adapted *The Odyssey*, *Steinbeck*, *A Trojan Woman*, *Agamemnon and Clytemnestra*, and *Me and Debry*, as well as the one-act comedy collection *The Shuffle of Life*. He lives in Spring Green, Wisconsin, with his wife Paula and their sons Declan, Nico, and Isaac. David is a proud veteran of the US Army. “Share the arts with a vet!”

GODS AND MONSTERS

BY JAMES STILL, DIRECTOR

Something to know about me: I like old things. I like old souls, old cars, old music, old photographs, old scars.... Ironically, I don't like a lot of old plays, but it turns out I may love ancient ones. *Oedipus* is ancient. Sophocles may have been the Tony Kushner or Arthur Miller of the 5th century BCE, but the plays he wrote vibrate and shimmer with a different kind of currency than contemporary plays.



Working on our production, I've wrestled with some of the same things I suspect you might wrestle with as well. The nagging anxiety that pulses under the surface of the play is laid bare by the tension between fate and free will. At first that might seem like a dusty, irrelevant thesis crammed somewhere between a required college lecture and our ancestors' lack of sophistication. But in my own wrestling with the play, I've discovered that the ways that fate and free will are emotionally at war with one another in *Oedipus* aren't that far from our modern-day struggles with conflicting extremes.

On the one hand, it seems very American to believe in free will and self-determination: that idea that if we work hard enough, or do the "right" things at the right time, that we will be amply rewarded with generous agency. But that quintessential belief that we are the architects of our future is often pitted against the old adage related to fate: "everything happens for a reason"—which is a spin on "it's out of my hands" or "what will be will be...."

Some have said that Greek tragedies are about people who learn too late. For me, *Oedipus* is about a knot that ties various extremes together, and the terror and suffering that result from not knowing when to leave that knot alone. It's tempting to wonder what was coursing through Sophocles's mind when *Oedipus* came provocatively pouring out. Did he have any idea that his play would survive more than 2,500 years? There's something profound (and disturbing) about something imagined so long ago that is still needed and still worthy of witnesses like you and me.

*Costume rendering for One from Within
by designer Sara Ryung Clement.*

One thing I can offer as context, that might help you open your own hearts and lens to this ancient play: there is a difference between identifying with a character and investing in that character. As contemporary audiences, we're conditioned by mystery stories that are logically solved by applying cause-and-effect: TV mysteries that have been reduced to familiar formulas, legal procedurals that have just enough psychological shadows that we're able to put ourselves in the shoes of outsiders and monsters. We have names and diagnoses that help us justify the worst of humanity.

Sophocles pitched something similar but with a very different form—something new to those first audiences in Ancient Greece, who must have cheered and recoiled as characters on an outdoor stage wrestled with their gods and monsters. It's too easy to simply dismiss Oedipus (the character) as the last one to figure out what may seem perfectly obvious to all of us. It's too easy for us to feel superior.

Instead, I urge you to watch/listen/feel the story of *Oedipus*, as it unfolds with unrelenting directness. Imagine you're on the inside of someone's head, where reason is on a collision course with hubris, where logic utterly fails to cooperate when we need it most. It seems deeply human to deny the obvious until it's no longer deniable—until you're left with the despair that comes with the tragic knowing that the monster you're pursuing is actually yourself.

The play asks us to *invest* in Oedipus and to watch his life unspool right in front of us in uninterrupted time. Oedipus is unable to undo the curse placed on him as an infant. He's unable to stop the story—and neither are we. Even if we've figured out the ending long before he does, the point is that we witness how power and heroism can quickly crumble. Put another way: it might take a long time to rise to power and sustain that power, but it takes surprisingly little time—time we never get back—for that same power to turn tragic.



*Costume rendering for the Corinthian
by designer Sara Ryung Clement.*

THEATRE IN ANCIENT GREECE

BY RICHARD J ROBERTS, RESIDENT DRAMATURG

The golden age of Greek theatre occurred between 500 and 400 BCE, when Athens was considered the intellectual and cultural center of the world. This is the same century as when the Parthenon was built.

Athens was a democracy, and its citizens viewed justice in terms of chaos and balance. This democratic structure was essential to the development of theatre: drama is the process of chaos restored to balance. The subject of the ancient Greek plays is the role of the individual in society. The emphasis is on character: seeking to know oneself through action. Freedom is the ability to think clearly, to see one's place in the natural order. We are defined by what we have in common. These ideas form the core of tragedy and the tragic hero.

In ancient Greece, there were very close ties between theatre and religion. This relationship can be seen in the location of Greece's most important theatre on the side of the Acropolis, in the very shadow of the most sacred site in Athens. Hymn-singing worshippers of Dionysus, the Greek god of wine and fertility, began to organize choral competitions. According to legend, Thespis was the first person to step out from the chorus and sing solo, thus becoming the first actor. It is from his name that we get the term thespian.

Greek theatre was presented in four week-long socio-political-religious festivals held every year. Plays were performed in competition, with a panel of judges from the common people. The winning poet was honored for his victory and treated as a civic hero. The Greek poet-playwright wore many hats: writer, composer, producer, director, choreographer, and sometimes even actor.

The Greek chorus, descended from the Dionysian choral competitions, was a group of a dozen performers who portrayed the community in the play: groups of citizens, civic leaders, jurors in a trial. They posed questions and addressed prayers to the gods, dancing and speaking rhythmically. The individual characters of the play were all performed by just three actors, changing costumes and masks to create each new character.

Every city in Greece had a stone amphitheatre built into a hollow space on the side of a hill. At the center of the amphitheatre, surrounded by rings of stone benches on three sides, was a large flat circular space where the chorus performed. This dancing place was known as the *orchestra*. On the open side of this space was a structure called the *skene*, where the actors could change costumes and masks. The *skene* was also used within the action of the play: it might serve as an entrance to a house or a temple, or the roof might be used for the entrance of a god. The space where the audience sat was called the *theatron*, which meant "the seeing place." This is the origin of our word *theatre*.

Although the *skene* represents the beginnings of scenery, scholars debate whether or not the Greeks attempted to create illusions of different locations. Battle scenes and deaths always occurred offstage; they were described by the characters and largely left to the audience's imagination. The vista of town and countryside beyond the *skene* was important, integrating the individual with the community and the community with nature, illustrating the natural order of things.

Although more than a thousand plays were written during the Greek golden age, only 44 plays by four or five playwrights have survived. The most famous of these is *Oedipus Rex* (*Oedipus the King*) by Sophocles, who created the tragic hero as we know him, and who developed the concept of the tragic flaw.

Oedipus is a prime example of irony: the disjunction between what seems to be true and what isn't true. Even though we meet Oedipus as a powerful king, his tragic fate is sealed long before the play begins. In many ways, *Oedipus* is structured like a mystery play—a whodunit. Throughout the play, Oedipus ignores the clues that point to himself and continues his pursuit of the truth.

The Ancient Greeks used theatre as a tool to teach moral lessons. Most plays—ancient and modern—tend to accept society as the norm and highlight the individual who falls outside that norm. Comedy teaches through poking fun at those who don't follow social rules. Tragedy instructs by dramatizing how the hero handles crises. *Oedipus* warns us that we cannot escape our destiny. Today, as we debate issues of nature vs. nurture or genetics vs. environment, the play's discussion of fate vs. free will continues to resonate.

*The ruins of the Theatre of Dionysus in Athens,
where Oedipus Rex was first performed c. 429 BCE.*



THE PEOPLE OF *OEDIPUS*

OEDIPUS

The mythical Oedipus is born to King Laius and Queen Jocasta of Thebes. Because of a prophecy warning that their child will kill his father and marry his mother, Laius has the baby's ankles pierced and bound to keep him from crawling, and sends a shepherd to take the baby out of the city and kill him. Instead, the baby is given to King Polybus and Queen Merope of Corinth, who raise him as their son. They call him Oedipus, meaning Big Foot, because of his swollen, injured feet. Years later, when the Oracle at Delphi tells Oedipus that he is fated to kill his father and marry his mother, he leaves Corinth. Arriving in Thebes, he rescues the city from the Sphinx and is crowned the new king, marrying Queen Jocasta. Together, Oedipus and Jocasta have two sons, Polynices and Eteocles, and two daughters, Antigone and Ismene.



*Costume renderings
by designer
Sara Ryung Clement
for Oedipus (above)
& Jocasta (below left).*

POLYBUS

In Greek mythology, Polybus is the king of Corinth. He and his wife, Queen Merope, are childless when they adopt a baby brought to them by a shepherd. They raise him as their son, Oedipus, never telling him he is adopted.

MEROPE

Merope is the daughter of Orsilochus, a resident of Pharae, located in the northwest part of the Peloponnese peninsula. She marries King Polybus and together with him adopts Oedipus. A few years later, she gives birth to a daughter, Alcinoe.



JOCASTA

In Greek mythology, Jocasta is the daughter of Menoecus, the sister of Creon, and the wife of King Laius of Thebes. Because of a prophecy warning that their son will kill his father and marry his mother, they send a shepherd to take the baby out of the city and kill him. Years later, after Laius has died, Oedipus rescues Thebes from a terrible Sphinx and is crowned the new king, marrying Queen Jocasta. Together, Oedipus and Jocasta have two sons, Polynices and Eteocles, and two daughters, Antigone and Ismene.

LAIUS

The mythic Laius is the son of Labdacus, King of Thebes. He is warned by the oracle at Delphi not to have children with his wife, Jocasta, but forgets this prophecy one night when he is drunk, and sends the baby out of the city to be killed. Years later he is reported killed by bandits outside the city.

CREON

Creon is the brother of Queen Jocasta, wife of King Laius of Thebes. When Laius is killed, Creon became King. When the Sphinx lays siege to Thebes, Creon offers the crown and Jocasta's hand in marriage to any man who can defeat the Sphinx. Thus Oedipus became king. When Oedipus is exiled, Creon becomes king again. He is a major character in Sophocles's *Antigone*, which focuses on Oedipus's daughter.

MENOECEUS

In Greek mythology, Menoeceus is descended from the Spartoi. When Cadmus, the earliest Greek mythological hero, is founding Thebes, he kills a dragon. Athena gives him the dragon's teeth and tells him to sow them. From the ground spring five great warriors called the Spartoi. The wisest of the Spartoi, Echion, is the father of Pentheus, who succeeds Cadmus as king of Thebes. Pentheus is the father of Menoeceus, who is the father of Jocasta and Creon.



*Costume renderings by designer Sara Ryung Clement
for Tiresias (below left) & Creon (above right).*

TIRESIAS

In Greek mythology, Tiresias is a blind prophet of Apollo. Like other oracles, Tiresias obtains his information through various means: sometimes he receives visions; other times he listens for the songs of birds, or asks for a description of visions and pictures appearing within the smoke of burnt offerings or entrails, and then interprets them.

On Mount Cyllene in the Peloponnese, Tiresias comes upon a pair of copulating snakes and hits them with his stick. Zeus's wife, Hera, is displeased, and she punishes Tiresias by transforming him into a woman. As a woman, Tiresias becomes a priestess of Hera, marries, and has children. After seven years as a woman, Tiresias again comes across mating snakes; depending on the myth, either she makes sure to leave the snakes alone this time, or, according to another myth, she tramples on them. Either way, Tiresias is restored to being a man.

Different stories are told of the cause of his blindness: In one tale, he is simply blinded by the gods for revealing their secrets. In an alternative story, Tiresias is blinded by Athena after he stumbles onto her bathing naked; his mother begs Athena to undo her curse, but the goddess cannot; instead, she cleans his ears, giving him the ability to understand birdsong, thus the gift of augury. In yet another story, Tiresias is drawn into an argument between Hera and her husband Zeus on the theme of who has more pleasure in sex: the man, as Hera claims, or the woman, as Zeus claims. Tiresias, who had experienced both, says, "Of ten parts a man enjoys one only." Hera instantly strikes him blind for his impiety. Zeus cannot reverse the curse, but in recompense he gives Tiresias the gift of foresight and a lifespan of seven lives.

Besides *Oedipus*, Tiresias appears in two other Greek tragedies set in Thebes: *The Bacchae* by Euripides and *Antigone* by Sophocles.



GREEK GODS



Zeus, in the collection of the Louvre.

ZEUS

In Greek mythology, Zeus is the god of sky and thunder. He rules as king of the gods on Mount Olympus. (His Roman equivalent is Jupiter.) Zeus is the father of many gods, goddesses, and heroes, by various mothers both divine and mortal.

PAN

In ancient Greek mythology, Pan is the god of the wild, shepherds and flocks, and rustic music. He is companion of the nymphs. He has the hindquarters, legs, and horns of a goat, in the same manner as a faun or satyr. He is often depicted playing his pan flute. With his homeland in rustic Arcadia, he is also recognized as the god of fields, groves, and wooded glens, and is often affiliated with sex, fertility, and the season of spring.

HERMES

In ancient Greek mythology, Hermes is the herald of the gods. He is the protector of human heralds, travelers, thieves, merchants, and orators. He is able to move quickly and freely between the worlds of the mortal and the divine, aided by his winged sandals. (In Roman mythology, many of Hermes's characteristics belong to Mercury.)

Dionysus by Caravaggio (c. 1596).

DIONYSUS

Dionysus is the Greek god of the grape harvest, winemaking, orchards and fruit, vegetation, fertility, festivity, insanity, ritual madness, religious ecstasy, and theatre. His wine, music, and ecstatic dance free his followers from self-conscious fear and care, and subvert the oppressive restraints of the powerful. His origins are uncertain. The Romans called him Bacchus.



ATHENA

Athena is the Greek goddess of wisdom, warfare, heroic behavior, and handicraft. (Her Roman equivalent is Minerva.) Athena was regarded as the patron and protector of Athens; the Parthenon on the Acropolis of Athens is dedicated to her. In Greek mythology, Athena is believed to have been born from the forehead of her father, Zeus. Since the Renaissance, Athena has become an international symbol of wisdom, the arts, and classical learning. Western artists and allegorists have often used Athena as a symbol of freedom and democracy.

Athena, in the full-size replica of the Parthenon in Nashville, Tennessee.

The Belvedere Apollo, in the collection of the Vatican.

**APOLLO**

Apollo is the Greek god of archery, music and dance, truth and prophecy, healing and diseases, the sun and light, poetry, and more. One of the most important and complex of the Greek gods, he is the prophetic deity of the Delphic Oracle, the god who affords help and wards off evil. Apollo is the son of Zeus and one of his mistresses, Leto, and the twin brother of Artemis, goddess of the hunt. He is seen as the most beautiful god and the ideal of the *kouros* (the athletic male youth).

PHAETON

In Greek mythology, Phaeton is the son of the sun-god Helios, who drives the sun chariot across the sky every day. Phaeton asks Helios to let him drive his sun chariot for a single day. Helios warns Phaeton that only he, Helios, can control the horses, but Phaeton takes the chariot's reins. He drives the chariot too close to the earth, burning parts of the world, and too far from it, freezing other parts. In the end, Zeus strikes Phaethon with one of his lightning bolts, killing him instantly.

ARTEMIS

Artemis is the Greek goddess of the hunt, the wilderness, wild animals, nature, vegetation, childbirth, childcare, and chastity. She is one of the most prominent lunar deities in mythology. In myth and literature, Artemis is presented as a hunting goddess, roaming the forests of Greece attended by her large entourage of nymphs and hunting dogs. (Diana is her Roman equivalent.) In Greek tradition, Artemis is the daughter of Zeus and his mistress Leto, and the twin sister of Apollo. Artemis was one of the most widely venerated of the Ancient Greek deities. Her great temple at Ephesus was one of the Seven Wonders of the Ancient World.

Artemis, in the collection of the Louvre.



MYTHICAL BEINGS

THE ORACLE AT DELPHI

An oracle is a person or thing considered to provide wise and insightful counsel or prophecy. The word *oracle* comes from the Latin verb *ōrāre*, “to speak,” and principally refers to the prophet herself, but it might also refer to the site of the oracle as well as the oracular utterances themselves. The most important oracle of Greek antiquity was Pythia, priestess to Apollo at Delphi.

Delphi takes its name from the Delphyne, a mythical serpent killed by the god Apollo. (In other accounts, the serpent is called Python, origin of the name Pythia.) According to legend, when Apollo slew the serpent, its body fell into a fissure in the rock, and fumes arose from its decomposing body. Intoxicated by the vapors, the oracle would fall into a trance and prophesy. Her ecstatic speech was “translated” by the priests of the temple. While the origins of the oracle at Delphi may have been mythical, the temple at Delphi was a real place, and the Pythian priestess was a series of real women. The Delphic oracle was widely renowned by the end of the 7th century BCE and continued to be consulted until the late 4th century CE. She was, essentially, the highest authority both civilly and religiously in male-dominated ancient Greece.

Priestess of Delphi by John Collier (1891).



Maenad from an Ancient Greek drinking cup from around the time Oedipus was written.

MAENADS

In Greek mythology, maenads were the female followers of Dionysus and the most significant members of his retinue. Their name literally translates as “raving ones.” Often the maenads were portrayed as inspired by Dionysus into a state of ecstatic frenzy through a combination of dancing and intoxication. In Rome, they were referred to as the Bacchae.



NYMPHS

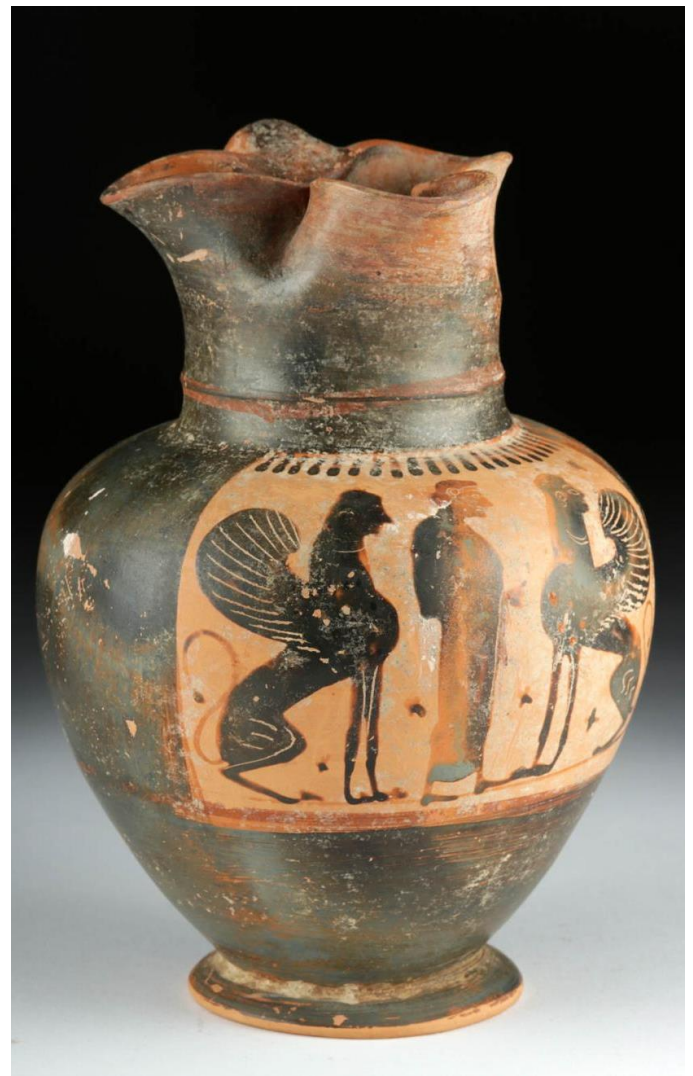
In ancient Greek folklore, a nymph is a minor female nature deity. Different from Greek goddesses, nymphs are generally regarded as personifications of nature, are typically tied to a specific place, and are usually depicted as maidens. They were not necessarily immortal, but they live much longer than human beings.

Nymphs Listening to the Songs of Orpheus
by Charles François Jalabert (1853).

Sphinxes on an Ancient Greek wine jug
from around the time Oedipus was written.

THE SPHYNX

The Greek Sphinx has the head of a woman, the body of a lion, and the wings of a bird; it is treacherous and merciless, a demon of destruction and bad luck. It is a popular subject in Ancient Greek sculpture and vases. It is different from the Egyptian Sphinx, which has the body of a lion and the head of a man and is thought to be a beneficial guardian. The origins of the Greek Sphinx are vague, but it is thought to have been summoned from deepest Africa by Hera (to punish Thebes for the abduction of Chrysippus) or by Ares (to punish Thebes for the slaying of his dragon). The Sphinx commandeers the gate of Thebes, challenging anyone who tries to enter or leave the city to answer a riddle: "What walks on four feet in the morning, two feet at mid-day, and three feet at night?" Those who cannot answer the riddle—and not one person answers it correctly until Oedipus—are eaten by the Sphinx. Oedipus, however, figures out the answer: Humans. As infants, they crawl on all fours; as adults, they walk upright on two feet; in old age, they walk with canes. In some versions of the legend, Oedipus kills the Sphinx; in other versions, the Sphinx throws itself off a cliff or eats itself.



PLACES IN THE PLAY

THEBES

Thebes is located in central Greece, the largest city in a region known as Boeotia. It is located on a plane between Lake Yliki to the north and the Cithaeron mountains to the south. These mountains separate Thebes from the Attica peninsula and Athens, with which it had a long rivalry. Thebes is thought to have been one of the first fortified cities in Greece; throughout its early history it was considered a major military power. *Oedipus* was written in Athens in the earliest years of the Peloponnesian War between Athens and Sparta, when Thebes was a firm ally of Sparta against Athens.

DELPHI

Delphi is located on the southern slope of Mount Parnassus, overlooking the Gulf of Corinth, about 60 miles west of Thebes.

PHOCIS

Phocis is the region of Greece that is west of Boetia, where Thebes is located. In Ancient Greece, it included Delphi, site of Apollo's temple and home of the oracle.

CORINTH

Corinth is located about 50 miles southwest of Thebes, on the Isthmus of Corinth that connects the Peloponnese peninsula to the mainland of Greece. Being located on an isthmus, Corinth had two major ports and a large navy. At the time Sophocles was writing, Corinth rivaled Athens and Thebes in wealth. During this era, Corinth developed the Corinthian order, the third main style of classical architecture after the Doric and the Ionic. The Corinthian order was the most elaborate of the three, demonstrating the city's wealth and luxurious lifestyle. For Christians, Corinth is well known from the two letters of Saint Paul in the New Testament, First and Second Corinthians, written about 500 years after *Oedipus*.

DAULIS

Daulis was a town of ancient Phocis located near the frontiers of Boetia on the road to Delphi, located about 17 miles southwest of Thebes.

MOUNT CITHAERON

Cithaeron is a mountain in central Greece located about 20 miles southwest of Thebes.

MOUNT OLYMPUS

Olympus is the highest mountain in Greece, located about 140 miles north-northwest of Thebes. In Greek mythology, Olympus is the home of the gods.



ANCIENT GREECE

1" = 40 MILES

LIFE IN ANCIENT GREECE

About midway through David Daniel's adaptation of *Oedipus*, a member of the chorus says,

"I'm not ashamed to say I've always been what some folks call salt of the earth.

I live by the sweat of my brow and the ache in my back, worship at the altar, and raise a family.
And I honor the law."

Ancient Greek religion was polytheistic, based on the assumption that there were many gods and goddesses, as well as a range of lesser supernatural beings of various types. There was a hierarchy of deities, with Zeus, the king of the gods, having a level of control over all the others, although he was not almighty. Some deities had dominion over certain aspects of nature. Other deities ruled over abstract concepts, such as love or wisdom. All significant deities were visualized as "human" in form, although they were often able to transform themselves into animals or other natural phenomena. While being immortal, the gods were certainly not all-good or even all-powerful. They had to obey fate, which overrode any of their divine powers or wills. The gods acted like humans and had human vices. They interacted with humans, sometimes even creating children with them. At times certain gods would be opposed to others, and they would try to outdo each other. Some gods were specifically associated with a certain city; but other gods were also worshipped in these cities.

Greek ceremonies and rituals were mainly performed at altars. These altars and temples were typically devoted to one particular god, or perhaps a few gods, and featured a statue of the deity. Votive gifts were left at the altar, such as food, drinks, or precious objects. Sometimes animal sacrifices were performed there, with most of the flesh taken for eating, and the offal burnt as an offering to the gods. Libations of wine would be offered to the gods as well.

Marriage in ancient Greece had less of a basis in personal relationships and more in social responsibility. The goal and focus of all marriages was intended to be reproduction, making marriage an issue of public interest. Marriages were usually arranged by the parents. In Athens, girls and boys were brought up much differently. While boys went off to school at age seven, young girls continued to stay at home until they were married, rarely ever leaving home.

In the Athenian legal system, the courts were seen as a system for settling disputes and resolving arguments, rather than enforcing a coherent system of rules, rights, and obligations. Ancient Greek courts were run by laypeople. Court officials were paid little, if anything, and most trials were completed within a day, with private cases done even quicker. There were no court officials, no lawyers, and no official judges. A normal case consisted of two litigants arguing whether an unlawful act had been committed. The jury would decide if the accused was guilty, and if so, what the punishment would be. In Athenian courts, the jury tended to be made of the common people, whereas litigants were mostly from the elites of society

SUICIDE

The suicide of a major character is part of the plot of *Oedipus*. This topic may engender questions among your students and may even be triggering for some students. Here are some resources:

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention has a web page focused on Suicide Prevention, with facts and figures, information about risk and protective factors, prevention strategies, and many other helpful guidelines.

<https://www.cdc.gov/suicide/>

The Indiana State government website also has a web page focused on Suicide Prevention, with articles on finding help, understanding suicide, and other topics.

<https://www.in.gov/issp/>

If you or someone you know is thinking about suicide and seeking emotional support, there are crisis lines available via phone, chat, or text:

- [988 Suicide & Crisis Lifeline](#)
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline](#): 800-273-8255 (TALK)
- [National Suicide Prevention Lifeline Online Chat Services](#)
- [Crisis Text line](#): Text IN to 741741 for free, 24/7 crisis counseling. We're here for you.
- [Trevor Project Lifeline](#) (confidential suicide hotline for LGBTQ+ youth): 866-488-7386
 - [TrevorChat](#)
 - [TrevorText](#): Text START to 678-678.
- [Veterans Crisis Line](#) (for military service members, veterans, and family): Call 800-273-8255 and press 1
 - Text [838255](#)
 - Support for deaf and hard of hearing: [800-799-4889](#)
 - [Homeless Veterans Chat](#)
- [Youthline](#)

(this list courtesy of IN.gov)

It is important not only to consider those who commit suicide, but also the emotional health of those who have lost a friend or relative to suicide:

The American Psychological Association has a webpage focused on Coping after Suicide Loss, with tips for grieving adults, children, and schools dealing with a death by suicide.

<https://www.apa.org/topics/suicide/coping-after>

HelpGuide offers this article about Suicide Grief:

<https://www.helpguide.org/articles/grief/coping-with-a-loved-ones-suicide.htm>

INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS

ALIGNMENT GUIDE

Seeing *Oedipus* at the Indiana Repertory Theatre is a great way to help make connections for students and facilitate their understanding of a text. Some key literature standards to consider on your trip would be:

READING LITERATURE

- RL.1 Read a variety of literature within a range of complexity appropriate for one's grade
- RL.2 Build comprehension and appreciation of literature by identifying, describing, and making inferences about literary elements and themes
- RL.3 Build comprehension and appreciation of literature, using knowledge of literary structure, and point of view
- RL.4 Build comprehension and appreciation of literary elements and themes and analyze how sensory tools impact meaning

READING--VOCABULARY

- RV.1 Build and apply vocabulary using various strategies and sources
- RV.2 Use strategies to determine and clarify words and understand their relationship
- RV.3 Build appreciation and understanding of literature and nonfiction texts by determining or clarifying the meaning of words and their uses

SPEAKING AND LISTENING

- SL.1 Develop and apply effective communication skills through speaking and active listening
- SL.3 Develop and apply active listening and interpretation skills using various strategies

MEDIA LITERACY

- ML.1 Develop an understanding of media and the roles and purposes of media
- ML.2 Recognize the purpose of media and the ways in which media can have influences

THEATRE CREATING

- TH.Cr1 Generate and conceptualize artistic ideas and work

THEATRE RESPONDING

- TH.Re.7 Perceive and analyze artistic work
- TH.Re.8 Interpret intent and meaning in artistic work
- TH.Re.9 Apply criteria to evaluate artistic work

THEATRE CONNECTING

- TH.Cn.10 Synthesize and relate knowledge and personal experiences to make art
- TH.Cn.11 Relate artistic ideas and works with societal, cultural, and historical context to deepen understanding

LANGUAGE HISTORY

- LH.3 Build understanding of history/social studies texts, using knowledge, structural organization, and author's purpose

ETHNIC STUDIES

- ES.1 Cultural Self-Awareness
- ES.2 Cultural Histories within the United States Context and Abroad
- ES.4 Historical and Contemporary Contributions

PSYCHOLOGY

- P.6 Students explore the common characteristics of abnormal behavior as well as the influence culture has had on that definition. Students also identify major theories and categories of abnormal behavior. Students discuss characteristics of effective treatment and prevention of abnormal behaviors.
- P.7 Students discuss the socio-cultural dimensions of behavior including topics such as conformity, obedience, perception, attitudes, and the influence of the group on the individual.

SOCIOLOGY

- S.2 Students examine the influence of culture on the individual and the way cultural transmission is accomplished. Students study the way culture defines how people in a society behave in relation to groups and to physical objects. They also learn that human behavior is learned within the society. Through the culture, individuals learn the relationships, structures, patterns and processes to be members of the society.
- S.3 Students examine the process by which people develop their human potential and learn culture. Socialization will be considered as a lifelong process of human social experience.
- S.4 Students identify how social status influences individual and group behaviors and how that status relates to the position a person occupies within a social group.
- S.6 Students explore the impacts of social groups on individual and group behavior. They understand that social groups are comprised of people who share some common characteristics, such as common interests, beliefs, behavior, feelings, thoughts and contact with each other.
- S.7 Students identify the effects of social institutions on individual and group behavior. They understand that social institutions are the social groups in which an individual participates, and that these institutions influence the development of the individual through the socialization process
- S.10 Students examine the role of the individual as a member of the community. They also explore both individual and collective behavior

WORLD HISTORY AND CIVILIZATIONS

- WH.2 Students explore the classical civilizations of the Mediterranean, Southwest Asia, South Asia, East Asia, and the Americas from 1000 BCE to 600 CE.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

BEFORE SEEING THE PLAY

Have you heard of *Oedipus*? What do you know about it?

If you've read *Oedipus*, what do you imagine a live production might look like or sound like?

What do you know about Greek tragedy and/or the classic Greek tragic hero?

AFTER SEEING THE PLAY

Do you think Oedipus fits the profile of a classic Greek tragic hero? Explain your answer.

Does Oedipus have a tragic flaw? If so, what is it and how does it lead to his downfall?

Is Oedipus a good king? What are his strengths and weaknesses as a king? Is he a good person? Defend your answer.

What role do the Greek gods play in this play? How do their actions affect the events of the play? What does their presence add to the story?

What role does the chorus play? Why are they present, and why are they important?

What are the symptoms of the plague in Thebes? How is this relevant?

Explain dramatic irony. Give examples of dramatic irony in the play.

Do you think Oedipus has free will, or is he trapped in his fate? Defend your answers with evidence from the text.

What is symbolic about Oedipus blinding himself? How is the theme of blindness used throughout the play?

What function does off-stage action have in the play? Think of how One from Within describes the offstage death of Jocasta and Oedipus blinding himself. Would these actions have been more or less effective if seen on stage? Why?

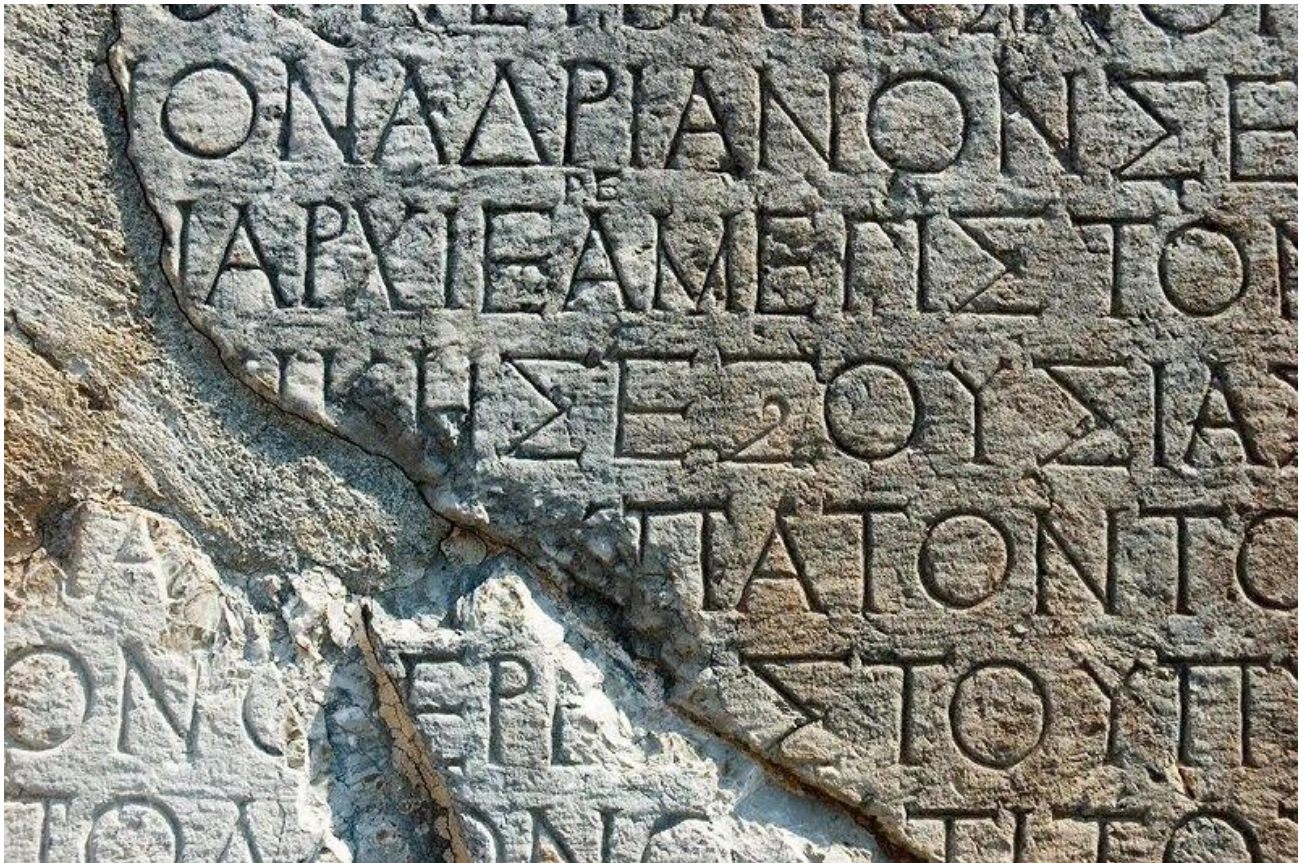
Who or what do you think is responsible for the tragedy of Oedipus?

WRITING PROMPTS

Write a letter from one of the characters to someone outside of Thebes, describing what you have seen and experienced on this fateful day. Who would you write to? What would you tell them, and what would you keep to yourself? Who would you admire? Who would you doubt? Your letter should express a lot of emotional responses and opinions.

Write your own spoken choral interlude. Chose your favorite story, perhaps a book or movie or another play. Write a choral interlude that could be included in that story. Where in the story might group commentary be useful? What would be the “form” of the scene: discussion, argument, forum, town hall, symposium, group meeting, family gathering? What thoughts and ideas would be shared among the group? How might individuals disagree?

Write a review of the play. A well-rounded review includes your opinion of the theatrical aspects—scenery, lights, costumes, sound, direction, acting—as well as your impressions of the script and the impact of the story and/or themes and the overall production. What moments made an impression? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors performance of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? Did you notice the reactions of the audience as a whole? Would you recommend this play to others? Why or why not? To share your reviews with others, send to: education@irtlive.com



ACTIVITIES

SOCRATIC SEMINAR

A Socratic seminar is a discussion in which students take part in an open ended dialogue. The teacher will ask a question and the students will answer the question, using the material studied. The question that you begin the dialogue with may vary depending on your focus of study, it but should be open-ended and provide material for thought.

Some potential prompts for *Oedipus* are as follows:

Is Oedipus a helpless victim of fate, or are there times when he could act to prevent his downfall? Is Oedipus compelled to do what the oracle has prophesied, or is he responsible for his own destiny?

Discuss the meaning of power and powerlessness as it applies to Oedipus. Consider the following questions:

What does his blindness symbolize?

Is he rendered powerless by his blindness, or is his newfound blindness a powerful means for him to finally understand his own fate?

Which Oedipus is more powerful: the king who doesn't know his fate (at the beginning of the play), or the outcast who now knows (at the end of the play)?

When do you think Jocasta realizes the truth? Why do you think she commits suicide? Be sure to provide specific references to support your answer.

How does Sophocles use the chorus in developing his story? What purpose do they serve? Who do they represent? What do they offer the play that the individually named characters could not provide on their own? (It might be helpful to research Ancient Greek theatre before tackling this question.) Be sure to provide specific references to support your answer.

The first question will be asked by the teacher, and the students will lead the rest of the discussion. This is a chance for students to explore the topic in depth. As part of this exercise, students are asked to bring their own questions to the discussion. Be sure to allow time for some of those points to be discussed. Review the guidelines below with your students before they begin.

(continued next page)

GUIDELINES FOR PARTICIPANTS IN A SOCRATIC SEMINAR

Refer to the text when needed during the discussion. A seminar is not a test of memory. Your goal is to understand the ideas, issues, and values reflected in the text.

It's okay to "pass" occasionally when asked to contribute—but not every time.

It's okay to be confused at the start of a statement or idea. If you don't understand what someone is saying, ask them to explain further.

Stay on the topic currently being discussed. If another idea comes to your mind, make a note about it so that you can come back to it later.

Allow one another to take turns while you speak, versus raising your hand.

Listen carefully to what everyone has to say. Respect others; you may disagree with their points or opinions, but the seminar is for discussion, not argument.

Speak up so that everyone can hear you.

Talk to the rest of your class, not just to the leader or teacher.

Socrates with his students.

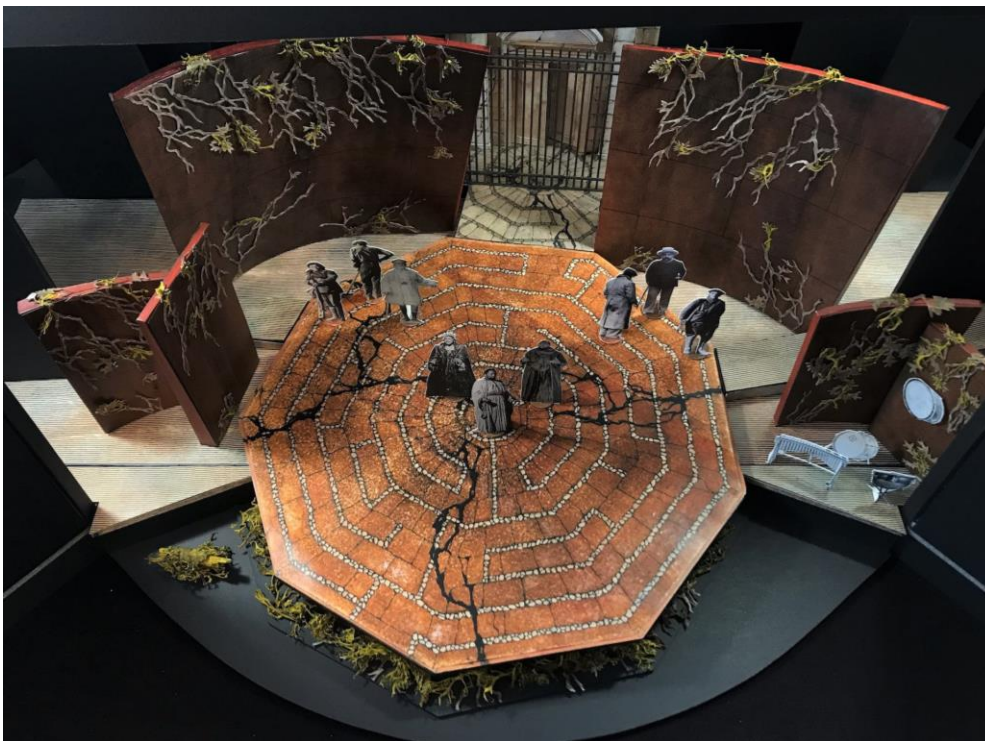


GEOMETRY IN THE THEATRE

The set for IRT's *Oedipus*, designed by Carey Wong, features a large nonagon in the center of the floor. Why do you think he might have chosen a nonagon? Create your own design where, instead of a nonagon, the central shape is something else. You could experiment with triangles, pentagons, or even unconventional shapes like hearts or stars. Think about how the shapes you choose would appear to viewers in different seating areas. What symbolism might be suggested by different shapes? With your new design in mind, create a scale model of your *Oedipus* set and explain the choices you made when designing it.



Scenic model for the IRT's production of Oedipus by designer Carey Wong.



FAMILY TREE

Create a family tree that includes both blood relatives and people that you would consider family, regardless of biological relation. Try to cover as many generations as you can— you will probably need to do research and talk to other family members. When researching your family heritage, try to think about how this history continues to be relevant to your life today. Does learning about your family’s past make you feel more connected to them, or does it perhaps raise more questions? Why is it important to remember your heritage and be knowledgeable about your family’s past?

When the class comes back together, present your family tree and outline the steps that each generation took throughout their life. Maybe they moved from a different state or country, maybe they adopted children, maybe they remarried. If there are any people in your family tree who aren’t necessarily blood related, explain how you know them and why they feel like family to you.

LIE DETECTOR

What would happen if Oedipus had access to a lie detector? Lie detectors generally work by measuring the examinee’s heart rate, blood pressure, respiration, and skin conductivity. With a partner, measure your resting heart rate by counting your heartbeats over a 10-second interval. Multiply by 6, and the result will be your resting heart rate in beats per minute (bpm). Then, try saying a statement, either true or false, and have your partner measure your heart rate afterwards. In theory, if your heart rate is faster than your resting heart rate, the statement would have been false. Take turns testing out this hypothesis and consider its applicability to Oedipus’s struggles. For which characters in the story might a lie detector be revelatory? Considering that Oedipus eventually discovers the truth regardless, how would a lie detector matter?

DEBATE

A central idea in *Oedipus* is the relationship between fate and free will. Although Oedipus attempts to avoid the prophecy and live of his own free will, fate eventually gets the better of him. Assign one half of the class to argue for fate and the other half to argue for free will. The students can host this debate in a variety of ways: a formal debate, a rap battle, a mock trial, or even a dance-off. Maybe they just hold a group conversation. Whatever the method, have both sides plead their case and discuss the differences between fate and free will. Have them identify the ways each concept had an impact on the plot of Oedipus, and then consider which idea is more significant overall. Afterwards, discuss the role of fate vs. free will in the modern world as opposed to Ancient Greece.

MAKE ART

In Ancient Greece, Apollo was the god of music, art, poetry, prophecy, truth, archery, plague, healing, herds and flocks, protection of the young, and sunlight. Create a song, poem, or other work of art that represents something important in your life—something that guides you or inspires you. It can be anything, from a family member to a passion of yours or even a character that you like.

A CONTEMPORARY OEDIPUS

When Sophocles wrote the original play *Oedipus Rex*, based on stories of Oedipus from Greek mythology, he lived near Athens during the Golden Age of Ancient Greece (499-400 BCE) and had experienced Athens's fall from grace firsthand. Many historians argue that *Oedipus Rex* is an allegory for the struggles of Athens throughout Sophocles's lifetime, as the Golden Age of Ancient Greece marks the period between the Persian and Peloponnesian Wars. Although Athens had been victorious in the Persian War and was prosperous afterwards, the later Peloponnesian War was disastrous for its political and cultural stability. Create a modernized allegory for *Oedipus* that reflects the same issues while incorporating modern elements and a setting relevant to today's world. How would you reframe *Oedipus* in the 21st century?

ACT OUT SCENES WITH CLASSMATES

Put students into small groups. Either choose a scene from the play for them, or have them choose a scene, and have them act out a scene from the play. (A chorus scene will offer opportunities for more students to participate.) Ask the students to be purposeful in their actions and have justification behind the choices they make. After performing their scene, have the students discuss their choices, what was effective, and what might be done differently. Perform the scene a second time, and then compare and contrast the two performances.



WHAT IF?

Sophocles's *Oedipus Rex* present a respectable and equal relationship between man and woman during a time when women were traditionally treated as inferior in Greek society. During his time, Sophocles was also structurally innovative in that he introduced a third actor to the stage, increased the number of chorus members from twelve to fifteen, and brought backdrops and scenery into the production. How do you think *Oedipus* would play out if it had followed the typical model of two actors, a chorus of twelve, and no scenery? With a partner, try your best to assume the various roles and convincingly put on a condensed production of *Oedipus* with no props or scenery to guide you. Afterwards, add a third person into the mix afterwards and see how the process differs. Does having one more person allow for a more complex and accurate performance?

RESOURCES

BOOKS

Oedipus at Colonus by Sophocles

Antigone by Sophocles

A Short Introduction to the Ancient Greek Theater by Willy Ley and Graham Ley

Greek Theatre in Context by Eric Dugdale

The Art of Ancient Greek Theatre by Mary Louise Hart

Tragedy, the Greeks, and Us by Simon Critchley

The Theater of War: What Ancient Greek Tragedies Can Teach Us Today by Bryan Doerries

Greek Legends and Stories
by M. V. Seton-Williams

Greek Drama (Bloom's Period Studies)
by Harold Bloom

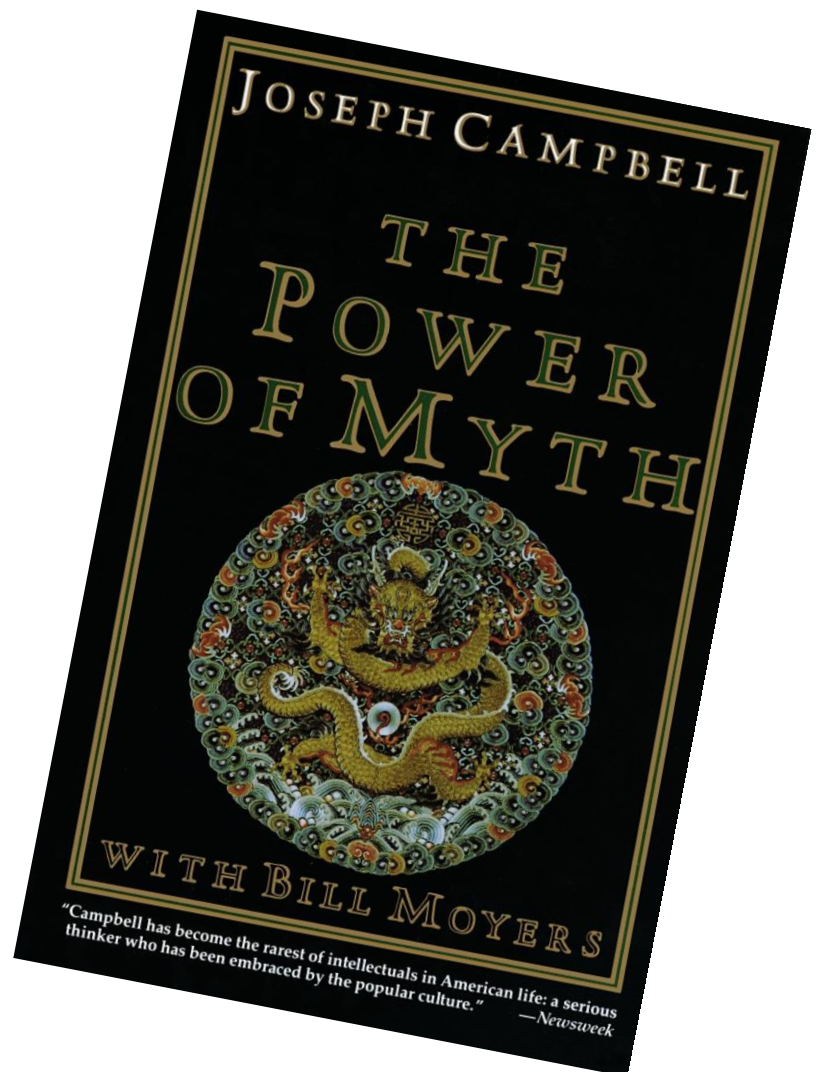
The Power of Myth by Joseph Campbell
with Bill Moyers

FILMS OF THE PLAY

Oedipus Rex, 1957. Directed by Tyrone Guthrie. Filmed stage version of the play from the Stratford Shakespeare Festival; utilizes masks.

Oedipus the King, 1967. Film directed by Philip Saville. Features Christopher Plummer, Orson Welles, and Donald Sutherland.

Theban Plays: Oedipus the King, 1986
Directed by Don Taylor.



VIDEOS

Crash Course, Oedipus: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Cj7R36s4dbM>

Crash Course, Ancient Greek Theatre: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VeTeK9kvxyo>

National Theatre Live, Intro to Greek Theatre: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aSRLK7SogvE>

WEBSITES

https://www.worldhistory.org/Greek_Theatre/

World History Encyclopedia page that talks about ancient Greek Theatre

<https://www.nationaltheatre.org.uk/backstage/greek-theatre>

National Theatre page talking about Greek Theatre

<https://www.reed.edu/humanities/110Tech/Theater.html>

university webpage that goes into depth on ancient Greek Theatre

<https://www.britannica.com/topic/Achilles-Greek-mythology>

Encyclopedia Britannica page that goes in depth on ancient Greek myths and legends

https://www.worldhistory.org/Oedipus_the_King/

World History Encyclopedia page that discusses *Oedipus Rex*

<https://greektraveltellers.com/blog/30-of-the-most-famous-tales-from-greek-mythology>

Page that discusses ancient Greek myths and legends

<https://www.britannica.com/biography/Sophocles>

Encyclopedia Britannica page on Sophocles

<https://www.college.columbia.edu/core/content/sophocles>

Columbia University page that discusses Sophocles

GLOSSARY

fate

Traditional usage defines fate as a power or agency that predetermines and orders the course of events. Fate defines events as ordered or “inevitable” and unavoidable. This is a concept based on the belief that there is a fixed natural order to the universe or the cosmos. Classical and European mythology features “fate spinners” who determine the events of the world through the mystic spinning of threads that represent individual human fates.

Dorian

The Dorian people came from the Peloponnese peninsula, the central part of the Greek mainland, and the Greek islands to the west and south.

goad

A spiked stick used for driving cattle or horses.

herald

In a royal retinue, the herald would be the person who announces the presence of the king.

hubris

Today the word hubris refers to excessive pride, dangerous overconfidence, and/or arrogance. For the Greeks, *hubris* meant something slightly different. The Greek concept of justice was seen in terms of *hubris* (chaos) and *dike* (balance). *Hubris* was a disruption of the natural order; *dike* was how the world should be. The tragic play was the process of *hubris* (chaos) being restored to *dike* (balance).

leviathan

The leviathan is a gigantic mythical sea monster dating back to biblical times, 2000 years before Sophocles wrote Oedipus.

pestilence

any deadly disease that affects the entire community

plague

Sophocles describes the plague in Thebes as “a blight upon the grazing flocks and herds” of sheep and cattle, and “a blight on wives in travail”—in other words, babies are stillborn. He also says “a blight is on our harvest” and “earth her gracious fruits denies,” meaning crops are affected as well.

sanguine

In this context, sanguine means blood-red.

seer

a person who, through supernatural insight, can see what the future holds

THE ROLE OF THE AUDIENCE

You, the audience are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:

Leave mp3 players, cameras, mobile phones, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home.

You may think texting is private, but the light and the motion are very annoying to those around you and on stage. Do not text during the performance.

Food and drink are not allowed in the building during student matinees.

The house lights dimming and going out signal the audience to get quiet and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.

Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage. Even if you think they can't hear you, they can.

Never throw anything onto the stage. People could be injured.

Remain in your seat during the play. Use the restroom before or after the show.

Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.

Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp—whatever the story draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Remain at your seat and applaud during the curtain call; this is part of the performance too. It gives you a chance to recognize a job well done and the actors a moment to thank you for your attention.

